



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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"understood of the people," so that, aided by graphic diagrams and illustrated by the microscope, the lecture proved extremely educative and enlightening to the lay mind, and was received with every mark of appreciation and approval by those present. At the conclusion, Mr. Frank Warner, as chairman, made an able speech in support of the lecturer's views and invited discussion. Several of the members asked for further information as to the hours a child should study during the day, and other matters of importance in the rearing of young children, all of which Dr. Wilson answered most fully and explicitly. It was the general wish that the lecture should be printed in pamphlet form, that the members might have the chance of possessing a copy. The usual vote of thanks brought to a close a most successful evening. The next Meeting of the Branch will be held on Jan. 17th, at Minto House, S. Woodford, at which Miss Fanny Johnson will lecture.

WINCHESTER.—On Saturday, Dec. 13th, Mrs. Wingfield very kindly lent her drawing-room for the lecture on "Co-education," by Miss Rankin. Dr. Wingfield introduced the speaker, who gave a most delightful and well-thought-out paper on this subject. Miss Rankin's varied experience enhances the value of her opinion on such a topic. Without too rabidly advocating the adoption of co-education in secondary schools, the lecturer set before us, with great fairness, its advantages and disadvantages. With regard to day-schools there seems to be practically no difficulty, but for boarding-schools the system does not yet seem perfected. Taking the home as the great training-centre, is it not the large family, where brothers and sisters rub each other's angles down, that produces the finest type of men and women? If this useful comradeship succeeds so well, why should it suddenly terminate, and girls and boys live apart for nine months of the year? Does such estrangement bring about the best results? It seems not, for the trend of the age is towards co-education, and Miss Rankin thinks it will in time take its place naturally and acceptably without any of the premature forcing which sometimes has the effect of rousing the antagonism of those who might otherwise have been its best friends. The lecturer quoted largely from the latest educational reports dealing with this subject. At the close, Miss Rankin was warmly thanked, and in the discussion which followed, Mr. Cowen gave a most interesting account of several Co-educational Schools in Hampshire. Miss Bramston also told us of a day-school where the system seems to have had nothing but good results.—The next lecture will be at the College, on Jan. 31st, when Mr. Sadler will speak of "Pestalozzi."

WOKING.—On Tuesday, Nov. 18th, at Riverside, Mrs. Franklin read a most interesting paper on "The Parent's Place in Education." Mrs. Franklin's kindness in coming so far to speak to so small a branch was greatly appreciated. The chair was taken by Mrs. Ingham Baker, who opened the meeting with a few words expressing the great pleasure it gave her to introduce the lecturer, and the warm interest that she took in the work. The lecture was followed by a certain amount of discussion.

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HERO-WORSHIP.

BY G. E. TROUTBECK.

MY subject this afternoon is Hero-worship and its importance as an element in education. Education is, truly, a much debated subject, and many are the theories put forward by those who consider themselves experts. The questions are indeed endless, and are, alas, not devoid of bitterness.

I do not claim to be able to expound the subject as an expert—far from it. But if we are to endeavour to place hero-worship as an important element and factor in education, we must try to arrive, very shortly, at some rough-and-ready idea of what we mean by that word "education," which ever rings so loudly in our ears.

I suppose I am safe in assuming that we all agree on this one point at least, namely, that education does not mean simply the acquisition of knowledge, the mere cramming of the mind with a mass of facts, scientific, historical, or otherwise. We agree, I feel sure, that education and instruction are not synonymous, not interchangeable terms. What we do mean by education is the drawing-out of all the natural powers and faculties, the all-round development, as far as may be, of the whole man, the just co-ordination of all our activities—physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual. This alone is education worthy of the name.

True education may be compatible with a very moderate amount of "instruction" properly so-called. A highly-

instructed person is not always, by any means, a well-educated one; and conversely, a comparatively uninstructed person is not always uneducated. "Learning," as Hegel points out, "when regarded as a mere process of reception and matter of memory, is a most imperfect kind of education.... It is through thinking that the thoughts of others are seized, and this after-thinking is the real learning." When all is said and done, is not the end and aim of all true education the *formation of character*?

Now I maintain that hero-worship, taken in its right and proper sense, helps us to learn that reverent admiration for every form of human goodness and greatness which is an essential element in high character, and which is inseparable from all true education. Evanescing in its outward form, hero-worship is, in its inner meaning, one of the most powerful influences for good that can be brought to bear on the human being. It is quite as necessary and important that our emotions and our sentiments should be educated and disciplined as that our intellectual powers should be developed. What we like and admire is of more consequence, so far as character is concerned, than what we know. It is here that the sentiment we call hero-worship has its work to do.

I have had conversations with friends on this subject, and have found that there are, apparently, many people who are prepared to disagree strongly with my views. I had feared that what I was about to say this afternoon was quite disastrously obvious, thick-set with platitudes, and was relieved to find a refreshing difference of opinion. It is clear that many people consider hero-worship to be a mild and amiable form of imbecility, and that, to some minds, the word suggests only what is silly. Of course we may, if we like, dwell solely on the exaggeration of an idea, but I propose to speak of hero-worship from its rational side, for in spite of the occasional follies perpetrated in its name, it has got a rational side. It is not a mere nonsensical adoration of some creature of our own fevered brain, of some person whom we picture to ourselves as a compound of impossible and incompatible excellencies. No, hero-worship implies the recognition of a profound truth, and is akin to that insight of the artist of which Tennyson speaks so finely in the lines:

"As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it."

It is part of that natural love which to the mediæval mind was, literally, the power that moves the universe, and of which Dante writes in the splendid and incisive way that is his alone, saying that "from some real thing it draws forth the ideal element."

"Vostra apprensiva da esser verace
Tragge intenzione."

It is just this form of love, this recognition of what is good, great, or beautiful, that is the most effective panacea for that besetting sin of democracy, namely, *envy*. As Goethe so grandly says: "There is no remedy but love against great superiorities of others." No unworthy grudging spirit can hold its own in a soul which has once learnt the lesson of which hero-worship, with all its sublime follies, is in a sense the alphabet. It is the recognition of excellence that keeps our thoughts sane and pure, amid the many temptations to pessimism and cynicism that beset us in times of rapid change like our own, when old landmarks tend to disappear, and leave us wandering in a wilderness of new and strange surroundings.

I would, therefore, consider hero-worship mainly in its effect on character, which is, after all, the only thing that really matters, either in this world or the next. And now for a few preliminary remarks on the general subject, remarks which, I hope, will not appear too far from the point.

Firstly, I will make bold to say that in spite of the famous watchword, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," the natural man really abhors equality, knowing, as he does at the back of his mind, that liberty and equality are two incompatible things. Inequality of every sort and description is the law of nature, and this wonderful arrangement just makes the difference between harmony and monotony.

A right-minded person hates a dead level, and instinctively feels that it is dull, ugly, uninteresting, and unfavourable to life, both without us and within. Most of our purest pleasure is derived from the power of looking up to something above us. As George Eliot says: "The first need of the human heart is something to love; the second, something to reverence." A writer of a very different school, Renan, points out very truly and beautifully, that "a man's moral worth is in proportion to his faculty of admiration." We may feel

pretty certain that people who are without this faculty of admiration have got something wrong with them—something very precious and sacred is lacking in their moral and spiritual equipment; they are dreary company, and create an arid waste around them.

I suppose we all have a Mephistopheles side to us, and although the “denying spirit” is very useful in his right place, he requires to be kept in that place with a strong hand. I have heard cynicism defined as the inability to perceive the ideal element in men and things, and it is to be feared that at times we are all of us not only unable, but unwilling, to see that ideal element, which, nevertheless, we are bound to believe to be there.

I would fain plead that the critical habit of mind should not be too much encouraged in children, that they should not constantly hear disparaging remarks on the things and persons around them, that they should not grow up in an atmosphere of pessimistic reflection. The power of destructive criticism develops only too soon, and the habit of “sitting in judgment” on everything and everybody is only too fatally easy to acquire. It is an unpleasant habit at any age, but odious in youth, to which we look for generous enthusiasms, and warm-hearted, if perhaps undiscriminating, admiration of great men and great causes. The critical faculty lays us open to great temptations, because the cultivation of it is often a cheap way of getting a reputation for smartness, and a talent for finding fault is frequently mistaken for real ability. As a matter of fact, this attitude of mind usually characterizes people of inferior character and intellect, and it might be well if this could now and then be pointed out to the young, who are naturally given to copy what seems rather “grown-up” and superior! At any rate, we may try and remember the somewhat mordant words of advice given by Prosper Mérimée: “Do not be too anxious to think the world foolish and ridiculous. It is only too much so. It is better to have some illusions than none at all.”

Now, whatever we may think of the advisability of having illusions, we may ask: What can be a greater moral preservative or a better intellectual stimulus than the sentiment which, for want of any other name, we call hero-worship? I am not suggesting that hero-worship is precisely an end in

itself, but that it is a very important *element or stage* in our education, and here I should like to draw attention to one or two points which indirectly illustrate my meaning. Hero-worship, as we usually understand it, forms part of most people's mental experience in their youth, and indeed, belongs almost exclusively to that period, to be followed only too often by a real and sad fading out of the glow of feeling as we grow to maturity. We are happy if our hero-worships pass peacefully into the glorified life of memory without the shattering of our idols, or the desecration of the temples in which they were enshrined. We are happy if no trace of bitterness remains behind.

It is a matter of common experience that, as life goes on, powerful personalities appear to cease from among us. We are fain to say that “there were giants in the earth in those days,” unmistakeably implying that there are no more giants left now. The commonplace, the mediocre, seems to usurp the place of what was remarkable, interesting, influential—a desolating outlook, truly!

There are many theories we might put forward to account for this almost universal mental experience, for such it seems to be. Some people will tell us that the change is in ourselves, that it is internal and subjective. Either we have lost the freshness, faith and enthusiasm of youth, or, perhaps, our judgment is more matured, our powers of observation better trained, the balance between reason and emotion more evenly held. Or, it may be:

“That the past will always win
A glory from its being far;
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not, when we moved therein.”

Others, on the contrary, will tell us that there is an external and objective change, a change in the world and society around us. We are told that it is an age of respectable mediocrity, that the fierce jealousy of a democracy is unfavourable to the development of powerful individualities, and that what we are pleased to call education is crushing out the last sparks of originality by endeavouring to run everybody into the same mould, like so many candles. Those who consider that an alteration has actually taken place in our outward circumstances might point to the various

changes, political and social, which tend to obliterate distinctions, and to the levelling up or down, whichever you like, that results from altered economic conditions.

But without dwelling too long on this point, we must admit that whether we are hero-worshippers suffering from blighted adorations or not, the disenchantments that lie in wait for us appear to be many, and we certainly cannot be accused of being unconscious of them, or of failing to lament them. The rather irritating complacency with which our so-called "progress" is vaunted, the tiresome and conceited glorification of modern ideas and "improvements," are counterbalanced, in many quarters, by a very sufficiently loud-voiced regret for the past, and by very pertinent suggestions that the past may have something to do with the wonderful excellence of the present!

However, the most despondent among us must confess that the fearful general deterioration usually complained of by the inveterate "praisers of past times" cannot have been going on from generation to generation in this fashion, for, at that rate, we could hardly expect to find even the remnants of a world left by now. So let us take heart, and realize, though perhaps sadly, that it is, mainly, we who change. As we grow older, we find it hard and irksome to adapt ourselves to different ways of living and of thinking, such as are forced upon us by gradual changes of circumstance, and we feel sadly tempted to think that nothing is as good as it was, and nobody as great. We say, in common parlance, that we have "seen through things," thereby intending to imply that we have weighed them and found them wanting. Surely we must have looked "through things" the wrong way, if we feel that they are worthless. We have thought only of the "outward and visible sign," and not of the "inward and spiritual grace." When we really come to "see through things," our soul will then "understand the great Word that makes all things new."

But, it will be asked, what has all this to do with hero-worship as a factor in education? In reply, I would suggest that it helps us to see what it is that hero-worship may teach us.

It does not follow that a sentiment or a mode of thought is foolish and useless because, in a sense, we may be said to

grow out of it. If, in later years, we put away childish things, we do not believe that the childish things have taught us nothing. Moreover, let us be quite sure that we have "become men" before we put away these things, lest we lose their most valuable lessons and consolations.

What then can we claim as the special lessons taught by the sentiment we call hero-worship? First, it teaches us liberality. It is rare, if indeed it ever happens, that we make a hero of a man from a low or unworthy motive. A hero, even to the silliest young person, is always someone who possesses really fine qualities, be those qualities physical, intellectual or moral. Nobody, I imagine, ever made a hero of a man merely because he was rich, or for any sordid reason whatever. Hero-worship is the recognition of some true merit, and that recognition is in itself of priceless value. But while insisting that the natural impulse is to admire and revere what is good, and to love the things that are more excellent, we should remember that this tendency, however well marked in sane and wholesome natures, needs encouragement. There are exceptions to every rule, and there is no disputing the existence of decadence and depravity among mankind. Therefore, those among us who have any influence or authority over the young have a responsibility with respect to the ideals we hold up to them, and the views of life which, consciously or unconsciously, we impress upon them. If we are bitter and cynical, if we admire what is false and unworthy, we hand on the seeds of death rather than the torch of life. It is, of course, impossible to enter into detail on so wide a subject as this; examples and illustrations cannot fail to suggest themselves, especially to those whose calling it is to watch and guide the development of young minds.

Again with regard to the acquisition of knowledge in its various branches, how invaluable is the influence of commanding personalities, and how potent the faculty of admiration. Does not most of our interest in history,—nay, even in literature and art, hinge upon a yet keener interest which is aroused by some heroic figure, in whom a whole epoch, a whole subject, seems to be embodied? What, for example, would most of us care for the history even of our own country, if the figures of King Alfred,

Edward I., Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and Mary, Queen of Scots, were blotted out of it? How many of us would be interested in the history of the great Civil War without the still-living personalities of Charles I. and Cromwell? What does a young creature care for the history of a confused and indistinguishable crowd? Even in what are called "popular" movements, it is the leader, the inspirer, who is remembered. As Carlyle truly said, "No great man lives in vain. The history of the world is but the biography of great men." And indeed, this saying applies, not only to the history of the world, but to the life-history of most of the people in it. In our own lives, have not the powerful personalities with whom we have come in contact made the crises, the turning-points in the development of our own minds and characters? Nothing calls out our powers and faculties so fully and so adequately as personal influence, the influence, direct or indirect, of someone whom we at the same time love and admire. There are few things more striking than the effect of a great personality—a hero, if we will, in developing the latent possibilities in those around him. Many talents, many moral qualities, seem as though they would remain dormant save for the vivifying touch of some powerful nature, a touch which teaches us to recognise greatness when we see it, and which, perhaps, gives us our first glimpse of our best self. If we look back on our lives in the past, or consider them in the present, do we not find that whatever of interest, usefulness, happiness they may contain, derives mainly from the influence of some person or persons, to whom we, possibly childishly, have attributed heroic character or attainments? From hero-worship, too, we may learn something of that virtue which is the very foundation stone of high and Christian character, namely, humility. As we contemplate our heroes, we feel that we must say with Lancelot of the Lake—

"In me there dwells
No greatness, save it be from far-off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great."

In contact with those whom we instinctively know to be cast in more heroic mould than ourselves, we find at once our own limitations and our own possibilities.

And again, hero-worship, the generous, if perhaps uncritical admiration of great qualities and high achievements, lifts us

above mere generalities, and places our feet on the solid rock of something historical and concrete. It delivers us from the "Humanity," for example) which we spell with the largest of capital letters, and which we so often mistake for true realities apart from realization in the particular. Does the cult of Humanity never stand between us and an honest, unselfish affection for individual human beings? Far be it from me to decry the "enthusiasm of humanity," but we have to learn it by means of love and reverence for some one person, and a hard enough lesson it is at best. Do we not feel, many of us, that the one person—the hero—is much more interesting and loveable than the class or the mass? An indiscriminate mob of people seems to some minds a highly unsatisfactory substitute for the one commanding personality, which symbolizes so much. Indeed, it must be admitted that there are natures to whom the crowd, the great number, is an object of repulsion rather than of attraction, reprehensible as this may seem to our modern ideas. To such minds hero-worship is at once a consolation and wholesome preservative against a hatred of their kind. I claim for hero-worship that it saves us from hasty generalizations, and, by fixing our attention on one great and conspicuous character, conduces to an accurate observation of our fellow-creatures. When we have learnt the lesson and discerned the meaning, the book is closed. The enchanting pictures, the inspiring words, live perhaps only in memory, and are potent only so far as we have absorbed into ourselves their true significance. We begin to see that this faculty of admiration which we call hero-worship is an unconscious recognition of the *supreme and absolute worth of human personality*, a conviction which often needs strengthening in these days of increased scientific study, for amid an ever-widening view of the wonders of the universe, we may truly echo the Psalmist's cry: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?"

When thus overwhelmed and confounded before the spectacle of Nature's forces, it is a source of strength to us if we can perceive the loftier and more essential features of humanity as illustrated and embodied in powerful personalities. We are thus helped in that intercourse with others whereby

alone we can attain the full consciousness of self, and we are helped to that conviction of our own personality which is our only test of reality. Of course, I do not advance so absurd a pretension as to claim that we are conscious of the ultimate results while our hero-worships are in their full swing; but we see afterwards that they have responded to a deep necessity of our nature, and helped to lay the foundations on which we may rear a worthy and beautiful edifice of life.

Finally, I propose to conclude with what at first sight may appear to contradict much of what I have been saying. It is evident, I think, that hero-worship in some form or other exists in the hearts of the great majority of mankind; that it is an almost inseparable part of the childhood and youth both of the race and of the individual, and that a change seems to pass over both the race and the individual when maturity is reached. We all recognise that we have to be taught by means of the particular and concrete, and that only thus can we rise to the apprehension of an universal truth. We have to be shown virtues and capacities as they exist, or appear to exist, in some one individual, whose personality assumes heroic proportions in our mind, and who comes to have an almost symbolic significance for us.

Hero-worship need by no means disgust us with the greater number of our fellow-creatures. If we are healthy-minded, it should, in the end, have a contrary effect. So far from engendering a contempt for the "common herd," it ought to teach us that in the sight of God there is no such thing as the "common herd." As our notions concerning the world around us become matured by time and corrected by experience, our ideas of heroism undergo a change. We find that we transfer our admiration from the various types of stage-hero, to people possessing virtues and graces of a less obvious and conspicuous kind. Having learnt to recognize the heroic, we are now able to see it in the humbler and obscurer places of life, in what we are pleased to call "every-day" duties performed cheerfully and conscientiously, in suffering borne silently. We come to appreciate a less blatant sort of excellence than that usually displayed by the conventional hero, and we acquire a greater respect for what is somewhat impertinently styled "ordinary" goodness—whatever "ordinary" may mean in such a connection. From the

contemplation of what we instinctively feel to be the ideal and divine element in some one person, we rise to the conviction that the same divine spark is present, potentially, in all men.

Hero-worship is an antidote against the decay of belief and the fading of enthusiasm, moral disasters by which, if we are overtaken, we may indeed exclaim with Hamlet,—

" How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!"

And lastly, hero-worship, rightly understood, is a defence against the scepticism which is fraught, not with intellectual doubt only—that were comparatively of little moment—but with that awful, numbing moral doubt which paralyses our best efforts and mocks our noblest aspirations.

Let me end with the words of Carlyle: "Hero-worship never dies, nor can die. Loyalty and sovereignty are everlasting in the world: and there is this in them, that they are grounded not on garnitures and semblances, but on realities and sincerities."

And once more, with Kingsley's lines:—

" To God-like souls how deep our debt;
We could not, if we would, forget!"